

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

ENGLISH NATION.

Saturday, January 12. 1706.

CREDIT, as hitherto Discours'd of, I desire to be understood, as it respects Trade only. The Credit call'd *Fame*, which rais'd from Good Actions, or from a general Rectitude of Conversation and Behaviour, is what *Solomon* calls a *good Name*, I have no design should be concern'd in this part of the Discourse; if I do Engage in the Enquiry after that *patch'd up Rarity*, it shall be by itself—'Tis a thing so Nice, so full of Counterfeits, so daub'd over with false Varnish, so much worn by Hypocrites, Covered by Men of Vice, and Neglected by Men of Ignorance, that I do not care for Embarking, in the search of what is so hard to be found; and what, when we have found it, we have so much Difficulty to know, whether it be the true kind or no.

But I am upon the Credit of Trade, which I call *Money's Younger Sister*, because

it is her Second in Trade, in many Cases, and on many Occassions, stands in her room, supplies her place, and in her Absence, for a time, Answers all the Ends of Money.

No Country in the World makes so much use of this Equivalent in Trade, as the *English*; whether it be occasion'd by the vast and Prodigious Circulation of Home Trade they have, which without doubt, exceeds any Nation in the World, or for what other Reason, I shall not positively determine. *I dare not say it is from any peculiar probity, or punctualness in Dealing beyond other Nations, tho' I am willing to suppose, we have our share of Honesty with other People too; but punctual Payments I believe are more frequent, and the Honour of Appointments more Sacred, speaking in other Countries, than here.*

But

But as we have a Prodigious Inland Trade, and Buy and Sell vast quantities of Goods within our Knowledge, or by Personal Recommendation, we give larger Credit than any Nation in the World. 'Tis demanded as a kind of Debt in Trade, and a Young Man, that begins the World with a Thousand Pound Stock, depends upon it, and may be certain, that he can stock his Shop or Ware-house, with two Thousand Pound in Goods, the Remainder he has six Months time for, or perhaps more.

Nor is this Credit any Loss to him in Value, at least in many sorts of Goods; for he who in a large Trade, deals constantly and considerably with another, and pays Currently in six Months time, shall Buy as Cheap, as he that comes now and then, with small Sums of Ready Money in his Hand, and there is great Reason he should do so.

But the great Injury to Trade, is the little Regard the Tradesmen in England, have to the punctual Compliance with their Times of Payment; he that buys at six Months, pays at Nine, or Twelve, runs on Buying and Paying, without exact Regard to Periods of Time, Buys upon Account, and Pays upon Account as he can get it; the Consequence of which, is among many, that the Debtor becomes Servant to the Creditor, and which is odd, the Servant pays Wages to the Master, is at his Command, cannot dispute the Price, dares not go away from his Ware-house, till at last the Disadvantage of Buying, deprives him of the Profit of Trade, and his Expence Eats upon the Stock: Thus the Man Trades himself out of Doors, the Creditor first Eats him up in Sale, the Man fees it, but cannot help himself; the Regret of it makes him Careless and Desperate, and at last, for that must be the Consequence, he turns Bankrupt, Breakes, and shuts up; the Creditor seizes his Goods, turns his Wife and Children into the Street, the Man gets to the Fleet or Queen's Bench, is taken up with an Escape-Warrant, those only Badges of English Cruelty, and is Carry'd to Newgate; there he Languishes a few Years in Misery and Poverty, and at last Dies for meer Cold and Want; and

this is the Unhappy end of the Tradesmen, Betray'd by too forward Credit into the Snare of Trade.

On this Account, I confess, Credit in Trade becomes a Snare to the Unwary Person, who either by his Original Circumstances, Reduc'd to the Necessity of Trading upon other Mens Stocks, or by the eager grasping at more Trade than he can manage with his own, is hamper'd in Debt, and can never find his way out.

Sometimes a Capital Loss, reduces a Man to this Necessity, and Credit thus given him at first as a Honour and Encouragement, ever after grows a load upon the Shoulders, that always grows heavier, as his Strength to bear it Declines.

But this Error in Trade, for such without doubt it is, has grown up into a Publick Mischief from another Relative Evil—For Credit, like all other Species, begets its kind; the Canker runs through all sorts of Trade, and then Centers in the last Buyer. A Tradesman takes long Credit, because he gives it, and the farther Goods are remov'd from their Original, the longer Credit is given—And I therefore desire to enter a little into the Remedy of this Evil, for without doubt it may obtain a Remedy. Moderate Credit punctually Employ'd with, without doubt is an Advantage to Trade every way; Exorbitant Credit Ruines Trade, reduces Buyer and Seller.

Two things would effectually Cure this Evil, Re-establish Trade, and restore Credit; of which I shall speak in their turn.

1. Punctual Payment at the set times, by Contract or Agreement stated between Buyer and Seller.

2. No Trust by Retail.

The least of these, would make the first feasible.

As to the first, it would lead me directly into the Article of Paper-Credit, which this Discourse is hastning to; and which if Establish'd on a right Foot, might yet be rais'd in all parts of the Nation to such a degree, as would to Infinite Advantage, supply the Place, of this Precarious, Uncertain, and Pernicious Credit, that now runs through our Inland Trade, to the manifest

manifest Destruction of Trade it self, and the Ruin of Innumerable Families.

And tho' I shall but touch it here, yet I cannot but observe, that an Essay at the General Currency of Inland Bills, which came from a Noble Hand the Last Session of Parliament but one, and issued in an Act of Parliament, *tho' that Act has had little Effect*, has in it not a Test only of the true Notion that Honourable Person has of the General Interest of Trade, but is a Door opened to all the Nation, to see their Remedy too, if they had but the Sense to close with it.

But Customs in Trade, frequently make Jest of Acts of Parliament, and will go on their own way, tho' to the Destruction of the Common Interest, in Spight of all the wholesome Laws can be made. 'Tis only opening the Eyes of the Men in Trade, that can bring these things to pass; and how that can be done when their own Interest will not do it, I confess is hard to imagine.

However, as I am not to be discourag'd by the Improbability of Circumstances, I shall make the Essay at Reducing Credit to proper Periods, Payments to punctual Compliance; and so make the Laws of Trade, as sacred as those of the Nation. This would make Credit a publick Benefit, 'twould empty our Gaols, prevent Loss in Trade, lessen the Number of Bankrupts, and render Trade safe; it would send Thousands of Families to work, that run without Foresight to Shop-keeping, and turn Beggars of Course; that cheat the Merchant, reproach Credit, and weaken Trade; and all this will be brought to pass, by procuring the Currency and punctual Compliance with Inland Bills; of which I shall take Occasion to speak hereafter.

Credit in Trade, like a Surfeit of Bread, is a most dangerous Evil, where it proves a Distemper; as it is the life of Commerce in some Degree, where it is duly observ'd.

'Tis true, Trade in some Places is carried on without Credit, or at best with but very little; as in *America*, where the Species of Money is always at Command, and the Quantity of Cash exceeds the Goods offered to sale; but this is a dif-

ferent Case: there can be no prodigious Vein or Channel of Trade, run in the World, as runs here without Credit; and it is not the giving Credit, but the taking Credit, that is the Injury to Trade. This taking Credit has innumerable Inconveniences; but all center in not complying with Payments, the Effects of which are as before.

Both Debtor and Creditor are injur'd in this Dishonourable way of dealing; the Injury to the Debtor I touch'd at already; the Creditor is injur'd in proportion, and by the same Method as the Debtor; for by his Disappointment in the Debtor, on whom he had such Dependence, as to promise Payment to another; he fails, and his Credit receives a Wound, and so the next; and the Evil spreads like the Waves, that push one another on to the next Shore, till that Wave that happens to be nearest, dashes it self up the Rocks and dies.

It would require a long Digression here to trace the Effects of the Insolvency of one Capital Tradesman; how many ways the evil spreads it self; how many ruin'd Families in Trade had been flourishing to this hour, but for ruin'd Families that before them felt the Blow of other Mens Disasters; and they of others, and so on without end.

I care not to enter the long Chain of Misfortunes that attend the Disaster of one Original Knave in Trade, who designedly encroaching Credit, and pushing into the Books of other Men, runs away and leaves a Succession of Disasters from Seller to Buyer, and from Buyer to Seller; one breaks another; and he another to the end of Trade: Nay, how often does the Blast, barely thrown upon the Credit of a Trading Person, whose Bottom is in it self safe, blew up all his Foundation, and ruin a thriving Man. I am loth to make Reflections upon a late Disaster, from a known and most villainous Encroachment upon Credit, which mov'd even the Compassion of the Government, and procur'd an Act of Parliament to be set on foot to prevent fraudulent Ruptures in Trade; because also I have some reason to believe the Fool that acted that open Cheat, not more Criminal than the Agent that impos'd upon and employ'd him.

But

But I cannot but tell the World my Observation on one part of the Consequences of that Disaster, which proves the Truth of my Notion, That punctual Honourable Compliance in Trade, would raise Credit to a more useful Degree than now it is in.

The Chief Misfortune of that Person hinted at before, complicated with others of a very considerable value, fell upon one House of Eminent Tradesmen in this City; the Particulars are too well known to require my descending to Persons and Names; I must tell them, and *I hope I do them no wrong, I am sure I mean them none*, as they were Gentlemen concern'd in a large and Capital Trade, and of Course oblig'd to accept of large Credits, whether in Goods or Cash, is not to the purpose: It was not all their Demonstrations of a real Substance at Bottom, not all their vast Stock of Goods in hand, able to go a great way in part of Satisfaction: Nay, if they had made it appear they were able to have paid 40 s. in the pound, could have sav'd them from Destruction; they had been inevitably ruin'd and blown up, their Estates torn to pieces by Statutes, jarring Interests of Creditors, and furious hair brain'd Methods, that generally Govern in such Cases. Nothing could have saved them, unless they had had immediate Money to have paid every Demand, and have answer'd the utmost Penny.

But an unspotted Character, an untainted Reputation for punctual and fair Dealers, upheld them: Let not the Gentlemen mistake me, I am not flattering them; 'tis every Tradesman's Wisdom, as well as every honest Man's Duty. I bring it here to prove that this punctual Dealing would, if it once prevail'd in Trade, prevent all the Mischiefs, or at least a great many of them, that attend Trade, from the surprising incident Casualties of other Mens Knavery; and as it would crush the beginnings of exorbitant Credits the Effects would cease of course, and honest Men would always be protected.

The Character of the Gentlemen instanc'd in above, not only protected them from the Ruin that furious Methods must have brought

them to; but it protected the Creditors of those Gentlemen from inevitable Loss, since, tho' they had more Effects than would have paid their whole Debts, yet left to the Mercy and known scandalous Methods of a Commission of Bankrupt; 'tis more than probable would have vastly diminish'd in Value, or they must have had better luck that way, than ever I heard any Man in those Cases.

Thus a fair Character, and a punctual Dealer, is his own Protection, and his Creditors Safety; he shall stand, when other Men fall; he shall live in Trade, when other Men die; and 'tis safer Trading with such a Man after a Disaster, than with another Man before.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Tuesday next will be publish'd,
A Reply to a Pamphlet, Entitled, the
L——d H———'s Vindication of
his Speech, &c. By the Author of the Review.
Just publish'd.

A Hymn to Peace; occasion'd by the two
Houses joining in one Address to the
Queen. By the Author of the True-Born
English-Man. Sold by John Nutt, near Stationer Hall 1706.

A Treatise of the safe, internal Use of *Cantharides* in the Practice of Physick. Written a few Years since in Latin, by Dr. John Greenfield, Member of the College of Physicians in London, in his own Vindication, upon account of a Contest that then happen'd between him and some of the College, about his administering them inwardly to his Patients. Now Translated into English with his Approbation, by John Ma ten, Chyrurgeon. To which are added, several further and very remarkable Observations and Histories of the said Doctor; also of the Translator and others, concerning the safe, prevalent, effectual, and wonderful Vertues of *CANTHARIDES* internally administered in divers difficult and deplorable Distempers, &c. As also, an Anatomical and Chymical Account of that *INSECT*, with some very curious Observations relating thereto, made by the Fire and Microscope. London, Printed for J. Wale at the Angel in St. Paul's Church-yard, and John Ised at the Golden Ball against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet-street. 1706.